

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 0817

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLAB, OREP (SOLARZ, STEPHEN), SF, US, EEC
SUBJ: SOUTH AFRICA: CODEL SOLARZ DISCUSSIONS WITH LABOR LEADERS

1. SUMMARY: IN A MARCH 29 MEETING, CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ SOUGHT THE VIEWS OF THREE TRADE UNION LEADERS REPRESENTING THE MAJOR RACIAL GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA REGARDING PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT U.S. INVESTMENT. THE LAOR LEADERS WERE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR VIEW THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD DISTURB THE PROCESS OF PEACEFUL CHANGE AND HURT THE INTERESTS OF THE LEAST ADVANTAGED GROUPS. THEY SUPPORTED U.S. ASSOCIATION WITH A FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES CODE SUCH AS THAT OF THE EEC. END SUMMARY.

2. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ, ACCOMPANIED BY REGIONAL LABOR OFFICER GOLINO, MET DURING AN AIRPORT STOPOVER ON MARCH 29 IN JOHANNES-
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BURG WITH RONNIE WEBB (COLORED), PRESIDENT OF THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA; PIET ROODT (AFRIKAANS), GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE S.A. FOOTPLATE STAFF ASSOCIATION; AND HENRY CHIPEA (BLACK), SECRETARY AND ADMINISTRATOR OF THE URBAN TRAINING PROJECT FOR A DISCUSSION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR SCENE.

3. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ SAID HE WAS CONSIDERING LEGISLATION WHICH

WOULD PROHIBIT ALL NEW INVESTMENTS WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA BY UNITED STATES CORPORATIONS AND REQUIRE U.S. COMPANIES WITH AN EXISTING MAJOR INVESTMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN FIRM TO ADHERE TO A FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES CODE. HE ASKED WHAT THE ADDITUDE OF THE THREE S.A. TRADE UNION LEADERS WOULD BE TOWARD SUCH ACTION OR, ALTERNATIVELY, LEGISLATION REQUIRING DISINVESTMENT BY U.S. COMPANIES.

4. SPEAKING PERSONALLY AND ON BEHALF OF TUCSA, WEBB SAID THAT THE PROHIBITION OF NEW INVESTMENT AND/OR DISINVESTMENT WOULD HURT THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND, IN THAT SENSE, BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. HE WELCOMED THE SUGGESTION THAT THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATE WITH A CODE SUCH AS THAT OF THE EEC WHICH URGES THE RECOGNITION OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR ALL RACIAL GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA. CHIPEA AGREED THAT THE BLACK COMMUNITY WOULD B E HIT FIRST AND HARDEST IF U.S. COMPANIES WERE FORCED TO DISENGAGE. HE SUGGESTED INSTEAD THAT U.S. CORPORATE INTEREST FOLLOW A POLICY OF "POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT" BY HELPING THE UNORGANIZED THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS, RECOGNITION OF BLACK TRADE UNIONS AND IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES. ROODT ALSO OPPOSES DISENGAGEMENT AND SAID THAT MANY U.S. COMPANIES HAD SET A GOOD EXAMPLE BY PROMOTING CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE. HE SAID THAT WHITES INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZE THAT CHANGE IS BOTH INEVITABLE AND NECESSARY BUT THAT ANY FOREIGN ACTION WHICH APPEARED PUNITIVE WOULD MAKE WHITES (BOTH ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS SPEAKING) UNITE IN OPPOSITION TO CONFIDENTIAL

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FURTHER BLACK ADVANCEMENT. WEBB ADDED THAT IF ECONOMIC PROGRESS WERE HALTED BY THE BLOCKING OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT, SOCIAL PROGRESS WOULD ALSO STOP AND THE CONDITION OF NON-WHITES COULD REVERT TO WHAT IT WAS IN THE 1950'S.

5. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ THEN ASKED TWHAT KINDS OF CHANGES WERE TAKING PLACE OR NEEDED. WEBB SAID THAT GREATER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES WERE NECESSARY FOR NON-WHITES AT ALL LEVELS. HE EXPLAINED THAT TO HAVE A HEALTHY SOCIETY, SOUTH AFRICA NEEDS TO ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION OF BLACK ELITES, AS WELL AS A MIDDLE CLASS. CHIPEA SAID THAT THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN RECENT YEARS BUT THAT THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE PROGRESS IN TERMS OF POLITICAL RIGHTS. HE ADDED THAT HE PERSONALLY FAVORS DECENTRALIZATION BUT OPPOSES THE FORCED DEPRIVATION OF BLACK CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS AND THE ABSENCE OF BLACK POLITICAL REPRESENTATION. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE BLACK COMMUNITY IS DEVIDED BETWEEN THOSE WHO BELIVE IN INTERACTION AND OTHERS WHO ARE PRE-OCCUPIED WITH THE RE-ENFORCEMENT OF BLACK IDENTITY. ROODT AGREED THAT SOME FORM OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION FOR ALL SOUTH AFRICANS IS NECESSARY BUT SAID THAT THE COUNTRY IS NOT READY TO ACCEPT THE CONCEPT "ONE MAN ONE VOTE".

6. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ CONCLUDED THE DISCUSSION BY ASKING WHAT THE PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE ARE IN THE FIELD OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. WEBB REPLIED THAT HE BELIEVES BLACK TRADE UNIONS WILL BE FULLY RECOGNIZED AND STATUTORY JOB RESERVATION REMOVED WITHIN 12 TO 18 MONTHS. ROODT AGREED THAT THE WIEHAHN COMMISSION ON LABOR REFORM APPEARS TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF MINISTER OF LABOR FANNIE BOTHA AND IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN MOVEMENT AWAY FROM DISCRIMINATION IN THE LABOR FIELD CHIPEA WAS NON-COMMITTAL. HE SAID SIGNIFICANT CHANGE WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER BLACKS WERE ALLOWED AND ENCOURAGED TO FORM TRADE UNIONS AND TO ORGANIZE IN OTHER WAYS AT THE COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRIAL LEVEL.
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